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8. SIGHTING OF THE GREATER ADJUTANT-STORK *LEPTOPTILOS DUBIUS* IN VIKRAMSHILA GANGETIC DOLPHIN SANCTUARY, BIHAR, INDIA

The Vikramshila Biodiversity Research and Education Centre Team has been working for the last three years on the conservation of Gangetic River Dolphins in the Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (c. 60 km segment of the River Ganga between the towns of Sultanganj 25° 18' N and 86° 46' E, and Kahalgaon 25° 15' N and 87° 13' E) in Bhagalpur district, Bihar, India. During their regular dolphin census surveys throughout the year, the team attempted to document other biota, particularly the avifauna of the Sanctuary.

On May 23, 2001, 27 km upstream of Bhagalpur (25° 17' N and 86° 49' E) we spotted some large storks from the boat. As we landed on the bank, some members approached the storks that they identified as Greater Adjutant-Storks *Leptoptilos dubius*. The long-legged birds were walking in an area (c. 400 m northward from the riverbank) similar to a marshy habitat with little open water, having grasses and sedges sparsely distributed. On closer inspection, the birds were found to have a naked head and neck with a huge beak, and appeared dull in colour. The birds were convincingly identified by their gular pouches, both short and long, hanging from the neck in the adults (Ali and Ripley 1981). Immature birds were identified by the inner secondaries that appeared dirty brown. Out of the 25 Greater Adjutant-Storks, 14 were adults and 11 immature. It may be mentioned that some of our members are trained birdwatchers and have been recording the avian diversity of the River Ganga for the last seven years.

This was perhaps the first sighting of the Greater Adjutant-Stork in this region although we have regularly recorded the Lesser Adjutant-Stork (*Leptoptilos javanicus*), Asian Openbill-Stork (*Anastomus oscitans*), Black-necked Stork (*Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus*), White-necked Stork (*Ciconia episcopus*), Painted Stork (*Mycteria leucocephala*), Black Stork (*Ciconia nigra*) and Common Crane (*Grus grus*) earlier in the Sanctuary. On May 24, 2001 while on a

downstream survey, we spotted the same Greater Adjutants at the same place, but this time there were 24 birds. Our fisherman also sighted the flock around the same place after a week.

Greater Adjutant-Storks are migratory wetland birds with resident populations of special conservation interest and are restricted to the Asia-Pacific region. They are Endangered species according to IUCN and face a high risk of extinction (Collar *et al.* 1994). The only recent breeding records of Greater Adjutant-Stork are from northeast India (floodplain of the Brahmaputra River in Assam) and Cambodia (Tonle Sap). Recent records of small numbers in Nepal, Thailand, Vietnam and southern Laos perhaps involve birds from the two known populations. Some 455 birds have been counted in India (Collar *et al.* 1994) and fewer than 100 at Tonle Sap (Hean *et al.* 1996). The global population estimate (restricted to Asia-Pacific region) is less than 700 birds (Perennou *et al.* 1994; Anonymous 1996). In view of their current population of 455 in India and less than 700 in the Asia-Pacific region, the sighting of 25 Greater Adjutant-Storks in Vikramshila Sanctuary appears to be very important. The number sighted in the Sanctuary fulfils the Ramsar criteria of 1% (Global population estimate of Greater Adjutant-Stork <700 and declining; Ramsar criteria of 1% = 7 Adjutant Storks).

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9. SIGHTING OF EASTERN IMPERIAL EAGLE *AQUILA HELIACA* FROM MUMBAI, MAHARASHTRA

The Eastern Imperial Eagle (*Aquila heliaca*) was reported from Maharashtra for the first time in 1983 (Goenka *et al.* 1985). This is the second record of the species from the State and first record from Mumbai. On both the occasions an adult was recorded.

I observed an Eastern Imperial Eagle soaring over mangroves and open fields at Mahul village in Mumbai on December 13, 2001 at 1530 hrs. It was a dark blackish-brown bird with a pale crown and nape patch and white scapular patches. It could not be confused with the Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos* as its wings were held parallel to the body and not dihedral while soaring. The other soaring birds present were Black Kite *Milvus migrans*, Greater Spotted Eagle *Aquila clanga* and Western Marsh-Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*. The Black Kites were seen mobbing the Eastern Imperial Eagle vigorously.

The Eastern Imperial Eagle is a globally threatened bird and categorized as Vulnerable (BirdLife International 2000). It

is described as a rare resident (?), but mainly winter visitor to the Indian subcontinent by Ali and Ripley (1983). Its distribution includes W. Pakistan (Baluchistan, Sind, North West Frontier Province), Nepal, north and northwest India (Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh) south to Gujarat (Kutch, Saurashtra). It has also been sighted in Rajasthan (Bharatpur and Kota) (Prakash 1988, Vyas 1993). This record indicates that its wintering range is extending towards Central India.

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10. STATUS OF WHITE-BELLIED SEA-EAGLE *HALIAEETUS LEUCOGASTER* IN SINDHUDURG DISTRICT, MAHARASHTRA

The White-bellied Sea-eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* is thinly, but widely distributed, and is listed as vulnerable in the Indian RED DATA BOOK. It is known to affect sea coast, tidal creeks and estuaries. The species is resident along the seaboard and offshore islands from c. 19° N of Mumbai down the west coast and up the east coast to Bangladesh, Laccadive Is. (now Lakshadweep), Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Sri Lanka. It is vagrant in Gujarat, and on the coasts of Burma (now Myanmar), Malay Peninsula and Archipelago east to Australia, Tasmania and W. Polynesia (Ali and Ripley 1981).

Gole (1997) reported 11 nests of the White-bellied Sea-eagle from the coast of Sindhudurg district, which is situated in the Konkan region of Maharashtra state (15° 35' N to 16° 33' N, 73° 18' E to 74° 13' E). This region experiences a hot and humid coastal climate with plentiful rain during monsoon, i.e.

June to September (average 3,000 mm). The temperatures range from 22 °C to 35 °C. The mean relative humidity is 80%.

During a status survey of the coasts in Sindhudurg district in 1999, we surveyed an area up to 5 km wide along the 121 km coastline. We located 32 nests of the White-bellied Sea-eagle; 62 nests were counted in Ratnagiri district in an earlier survey (Katdare and Mone 2003). Nesting sites of the White-bellied Sea-eagle were located while walking along the coast in the breeding season (October to January) and collecting information from the locals by showing them pictures of the bird.

Tree species

White-bellied sea-eagle nests were found on seven tree species (Table 1).